

*A Discourse concerning Digestion in a Letter to the  
Publisher from Mr. Charles Leigh of Brasen-Nose  
Colledge Oxford.*

S I R,

Should I reckon up here the many controverted *hypotheses* of *Anatomists* concerning this *subject*, & set up a new one of my own; it might perhaps seem a piece of fond presumption: I shall not therefore be so vainly *opinionative* as to think that I have here fully explained the nature of *Chylification*, but shall onely give you an account of an *Artificiall* digester which I hope may something illustrate the *naturall* one. It has been observ'd by *Helmont*, *Mebius*, *Tachenius*, and the Honourable Mr. *Boyle*, that meats by being kept in an *acid* liquor, would looke extremely *white*. But I doe not find that by the help of a *salt* that is meerly an *acid*, there can be any *chyle* prepared from any *meats*. *Wedelius* is of opinion that *Chyle* is nothing but a mixture of *oil* and *Serum*. *Tilingius* affirms that tis made by a *nitrous* Salt. Dr. *Harvey* by trituration. Dr. *Willis* by an *acid* and *Sulphur*. *Diemerbrook* and *Sylvius* by the *Saliva*. Dr. *Mayow* by a *Nitroaerial* principle. *Galen* and *Aristotle* by *heat*. Others by a *ferment* spewed from the *glands* in the bottom of the *Stomach*. Others by the *relicts* of the meat grown *sour*. So many different *opinions* I shall neither pretend to reconcile or decide. And shall therefore onely lay down the *Phænomena* which this liquor afforded, and from them draw inferences as probable conjectures. But shall in the first place premise a description of this *digesting liquor*, and see how far it may probably parallel the *naturall ferment* in the *Stomach*. The taste of it is like meat vomited out of a full stomach, something *Sour*, but will not ferment with an *Alkali*.

It is prepared from spirit of *Sulphur*, spirit of *Hartsborn*,  
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the *Chyle* of a *Dog* and the *Saliva*: it is pellucid and without any smell: the *Salt* that it shoots into is *cubical*. Upon *veal* it afforded these *Phænomena*. Into a dram of this liquor I put a piece of *veal* about the bigness of a *Nut*, & set it upon a digesting furnace. In two hours time there came from the meat a liquor that had the colour and taste of *Chyle*, and the meat afterwards was lighter, dry, and insipid. And it afforded the same *Phænomena* also in beef, mutton, or any other meat that I could meet with. And here it is to be noted, that tho it has been affirm'd by some that the same thing may be done by *acid* liquors only, yet since by all the tryals I have made upon 'em, I have not yet observ'd the like *Phænomena*, I hope my *Scepticism* in this case may be pardonable. If therefore we now consider that by the help of this *menstruum* there came from the before mentioned meats, a liquor which had the colour and taste of *Chyle*, and if we further consider that the taste of this *menstruum* is not distinguishable from the taste which is perceivable in meats vomited out of a full stomach; I hope I may without being thought fond of an *Hypothesis*, conjecture that by some such *menstruum* the meat is digested in the *stomach*. But here I would not be thought to affirm that by a liquid *menstruum* alone the meats are digested, but that there are likewise required these further requisits, in some, or in most creatures. First, that the *stomach* receive a gentle heat from the *liver*. 'Tis therefore for this reason said by the Learned *Glisson*, *Calor hepatis in hepate est actio, & ventriculo est usus*.

Secondly, that the *stomach* have a *natural* situation. For, says *Riolanus*, *Interdum ventriculus propendit usque ad umbilicum, ut observatum in cadaveribus, quod vitæ coctioni multum incommodat*. And *Vesalius* in his *Anatomy* Lib. 4. gives us this example. *Observavi omentum in scrotum devolutum & auctum ventriculum ex sede sua distraxisse, adeo ut munus ejus deficeret*. Thirdly, it is assisted by the *omentum*. This may be argued from those creatures which

have no caul, helping *concoction* by doubling their hinder legs, and resting their bellies upon them, as hares and conies. A second instance may be brought from *Valentinus Andreas Molenbrochius in Miscellaneis curiosis Ann. 1670. Militaris quidam vir dum viveret nil nisi ventriculum accusabat, quod nullum cibum appeteret coqueretque, cui ad confortandum ventriculum multa adhibita fuere, sed omnia incassum: dissecto cadavere, omentum plane putrefactum est, ventriculo reliquisque visceribus salvis; ex quo colligitur, omentum ad ventriculi coctionem non parum facere.* Fourthly, 'tis necessary that the *stomach* have a *Tunica villosa*: 1. Because that by that it is enabled to divide the meat into parcells, which undoubtedly must much facilitate the operation of the *natural ferment*: As we see all *menstruums* will sooner dissolve *metalls* when they are filed into parcells, than when they continue in the lump. 2. If it had not a *Tunica villosa*, the *Tunica carnosæ* would be apt to be too much distended by our meat and drink, which would necessarily weaken the tonical motion of the *stomach*, and consequently therefore its *digestion*.

Fifthly, that there be a right *digestion*, it's necessary that there be windings of the *Intestines*; for if it were not for these, the *digested meat* would move too fast from the *stomach*, and so torment us with perpetuall hunger. Which assertion I think may sufficiently be confirm'd by these two instances. The first is from *Cabrollius* observation the 10th, and *Riolanus Anthropol. lib. 2. cap.*

*Firminus Chaudonius voracitate erat Erysictonæa, cui causam præbuit, quod nec stomachi nec intestinorum figuram ullam habebat proportionatam, unicum à Pylori loco, ad Anum Intestinum erat sine ullo anfractu, cumque aliorum Intestina quatuordecim æquant ulnas, hujus vix ad quatuor spithamas accedebant in formam literæ S.* The 2. Instance is taken from a creature in *Lithuania* and *Muscovy* that generally feeds upon it's prey, till it's belly be swell'd like a bladder, then conveys it self to some strait place, and so violently forces

forces the meat out of its *stomach* and *intestines*, and then immediately returns to its prey with as craving an appetite as before: which continuall and insatiable hunger is judged to proceed from the *straitness* of its *Intestines*; for, as the Learned *Pamius* observ'd in its dissection, its guts had no circumvolutions or windings. From these therefore 'tis plain that besides a fermenting liquor in the stomach other externall means concurr to digestion.

I shall therefore in the last place inquire what may probab'y be the *Ingredients* of the *natural ferment*, & so conclude. The *Ingredients* of the *natural ferment* I take to be these. The *saliva*, the *succus* of the *Glands* of the *stomach*, and a *nitro-aereal spirit* of the *nerves*. That the *Saliva* is an ingredient, may seem probable from these reasons. 1. Because that by the help of this, *meats* tho impregnated with different principles, may be made to mix with a *menstruum*; for, as the Learned *Steno* has it pag. the 27th, *de glandulis oris: Saliva vero omnia ferre valet; sive intra corpus sive extra corpus examinaveris, nihil invenies quod illa respuet, nihil cui sine pugna non associetur*. 2. Since the *Saliva* is impregnated with a volatile salt, it is probable that that too may help digestion. The second ingredient I take to be a *liquor* that is separated by the *glands* in the bottom of the *stomach*. And this I shall evince by the Authority of the famous *Willis*, and *Sylvius De le Boe*. And first from Dr. *Willis* in his *Pharmaceutice Rationalis*, pag. 6. *Tunica hæc villosa in postica sive convexa ejus superficie, quæ tunicæ nerveæ coheret, glandulis annulatis numerosissimis ubique confita est, quæ proculdubio vasorum in tunica nervea dehiscientium ora contegunt: ac (uti videtur) humorem illis destinatum aut ab eis depositum, immediatius excipiunt ac percolant*. *Sylvius* pag 881. gives us this account of it: *hoc chylicans fermentum in recens natorum vitulorum ventriculis reperitur crassiusculum, diciturque coagulum: sensim autem minuitur, ac in adultis, glutinis instar, offenditur liquidiusculum inter ventriculi rugas hærens*. By these there-

fore it seems probable, that the *glands* in the *tunica villosa* separate a *fermenting liquor*, and 'tis further observ'd that those creatures which have the most of these *glands*, are the most voracious. Lastly that the *nitro-aerial* spirits of the *nerves* are an ingredient of the *stomachical ferment*, seems reasonable from the Arguments of Dr. Mayow, pag. 55. He argues thus: *Jam vero cum spiritus animales e particulis nitro-aereis constant, haud difficile erit intellectu quomodo effectus praedicti ab iisdem in ventriculo perficiuntur. Quamquam enim spiritus Nitro-aereus acidus non est, ab eodem tamen ferrum corroditur, vitriola perficiuntur, salia fixa ad fluorem perducuntur, rerumque compages tanquam ab universali menstruo solvuntur.* These therefore ( Sir ) are my thoughts concerning digestion; but here is nothing in these *Dogmatically* asserted. If therefore any *Hypothesis* here may be found erroneous, upon better grounds I shall readily lay it down.

I am, SIR,

Your very humble Servant,

C. L.